

Count Your Blessings

Put your faith into action through daily reflections and challenges.

2019



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Count Your Blessings

Welcome!

We're delighted that you are joining our Lent journey to contemplate our lives and take action to rise up against climate change.

Through Lent themes of **awareness, repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation, transformation** and **blessing** you'll discover more about the lives of those who are pushed to the brink of survival by climate change and precarious livelihoods. Each daily action will help you give, act and pray so your neighbours around the world can rise up and overcome.

How to count your blessings

1. Read the daily reflection.
2. Count the blessings and jot your total in the space.*
3. Pray and act with us to share your blessings.
4. After Easter, add up your contributions and send your total gift to Christian Aid. It's really easy – just use the form provided or donate online at

caid.ie/lent

*Please give what you can afford. Daily giving amounts are only suggestions. Remember, every pound you give will transform lives.

Get the kids involved!

We've made a special version of *Count Your Blessings* for children.

Order your copies before they run out...

- 📞 **Call: 028 9064 8133**
- ✉ **Email: belfast@christian-aid.org**
Print your own copies
- 🌐 **Visit: caid.ie/lent**



Eva and Lope invite you into their community on small, remote islands in the Philippines.

During Lent, you'll meet members of this community and read how Christian Aid's partner ICODE is helping them thrive.



caid.ie/lent

Mary Ann is one of the few female fisherfolk on Manlot island.



Mary Ann and her son Alexis with their fishing boat.


Awareness

Lent is the ideal time to pause. Step back. Raise our awareness of things we take for granted.

Wednesday 06 March - Ash Wednesday

Today is Ash Wednesday, which marks the first day of Lent. It's also an opportunity to fix our eyes on Jesus through prayer, fasting and repentance. God uses our prayers in powerful ways. Jesus said 'Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, "Move from here to there," and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.'



 Thank God for each new person you meet today and consider how you can be the light of Jesus to people you meet.

Thursday 07 March

The Philippines is one of the countries most affected by climate change. More than half of the population live in disaster-prone areas*. About 20 typhoons hit the country each year, and many cities are vulnerable to rising sea levels.



In the UK we can insure against all kinds of risks. Give £1 for each insurance policy your family has.




*According to the World Risk Report 2014.

Friday 08 March

Today is International Women's Day. Mary Ann is one of the few female fisherfolk on Manlot island. Even though she is not able to swim, Mary Ann was determined to support her husband and family by taking up fishing.



'I've experienced several dangerous situations... I believe that God is helping in many ways and whatever comes he will take charge.'

 Lord, thank you for the determination of people like Mary Ann who put their families first despite their circumstances. Make us aware of the areas in our lives where we have not upheld equality and change our hearts.

Saturday and Sunday 09-10 March

Eva says: 'As humans, we are supposed to be equal, so I appeal to richer nations to stop activities which are destroying the environment and violating the human rights of the poorer nations. It's us, on this island, who are suffering.'

Did you know that the big banks support and invest in fossil fuels, even though we know that we must urgently stop burning fossil fuels to tackle climate change?

Read our campaign guide to find out why banks could be key to tackling climate change, but are not yet doing enough.



caid.ie/climate

Your total for
Week 1





Marlito has turned his back on dynamite fishing. He has switched to sustainable fishing methods.

Repentance

Awareness can only bring us so far. Repentance allows us to align ourselves with God's heart.

Monday

11 March

Awareness can only bring us so far. Repentance allows us to align ourselves with God's heart.

Think about the areas where you've been irresponsible in your attitudes to global warming. Write down three ways you can 'live greener' and stick these on your fridge as a reminder.

Take a picture and put it on Instagram, Facebook or Twitter using **#CountYourBlessings** **#ChristianAid** and tag five friends to do the same.

Tuesday

12 March

Christian Aid's partner, ICODE, helped Marlito see that his actions of dynamite fishing were unsustainable for the community, so he switched to sustainable fishing methods.

It's only through our willingness to listen that we start to realise the consequences of our actions. Could you chat with your church leaders about global warming? Can your church make changes towards being more environmentally friendly? Visit the Eco-Congregations website for lots of ideas ecocongregationireland.com

Wednesday

13 March

Emelisa, a fisherwoman and Marlito's wife, says: 'The closeness of the community here shows. It's easy for us to seek support now and help people out at sea while protecting the area together.'

Who would be there for you when you truly needed them? Give 50p in thanks for each person.

Take a moment to thank God for their presence in your life.



Thursday

14 March

When Typhoon Haiyan hit, the area was devastated. ICODE provided housing, materials and training so that the fisherfolk could use sustainable fishing methods.

Solar-powered lights are used to attract squid at night and monitor illegal fishing activity.

Give 20p for each lightbulb in your home.



Friday

15 March

Emelisa says of ICODE's training: 'I've learned about how to protect the environment and to understand the practices that are illegal and harmful.'

Rich countries like ours have done the most to cause climate change. We must urgently reduce emissions and invest in a cleaner future.

Visit caid.ie/climate to email HSBC and ask them to stop funding climate change, and instead support renewable energy.

Weekend

16-17 March

The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. Genesis 2:15 God has called us to look after the earth, but there are times that we haven't taken this calling seriously.

Watch our 'Till and Keep' video: caid.ie/tillandkeep



Help steward God's creation – try a Carbon Fast Sabbath.

Use as little fossil fuels as possible throughout the day by minimising your energy use.

Your total for Week 2





The community plants mangroves to protect against storm surges and preserve marine life.

Eva planting mangroves.

Forgiveness

Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

Isaiah 1:18

Thursday 21 March

Today is the international day of forests. Forests are the lungs of the earth!

Many mangrove forests have been cut down and sold for profit. ICODE trains the community in replanting mangroves to protect against storm surges and preserve marine life.

Count how many single-use plastic packages you have in your fridge and give 10p for each one.



Monday 18 March

One of the beautiful things about God is that he will always forgive. No matter what we've done, forgiveness allows us to start all over again. Humans have repeatedly got it wrong when it comes to the environment. So let's start over. Let's bring the environment back to the way it should be. One step at a time.

Take some time to enjoy God's wonderful creation today. Take a photo and post to social media using #CountYourBlessings #ChristianAid and tag five friends.

Friday 22 March

Today is World Water Day. The community is calling for the local coal plant to be closed as it's emitting harmful gases. The biggest concern is the foul-smelling liquid residue in the ocean. The coal plant pollutes the air, water and marine life. Islanders speak of their children getting skin conditions; everyone worries about their health.

Give 50p each time you turn on the tap and use clean, safe water.



Tuesday 19 March

Emmanuel, Executive Director of ICODE, has witnessed the forgiveness of families like Emelisa's: '...it's good to have "the thief to catch a thief" (former illegal fisherfolk turned protectors). When it comes to climate change, developed countries have created most of the carbon pollution; it's up to us to repent and change our ways.'

Take the Carbon Challenge by ditching the car this week. Try walking, biking or taking public transport.

Wednesday 20 March

Emmanuel tells us that the pollution and plastic waste appears from the sea between June and September and they have to clear this every year.

Give the money you would have spent on fuel from this week's Carbon Challenge.



Weekend 23-24 March

Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. Ephesians 4:32

Consider how the money in your bank account and the things you have bought have impacted vulnerable people in places like the Philippines.



Read through our Bible study on your own, or with friends. Reflect upon how your money could be building a better world. Visit caid.ie/cyb



Your total for Week 3





Thanks to a patrol boat, Lope and Leonardo now monitor illegal activity.

Lope and his brother Leonardo.

Reconciliation

All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

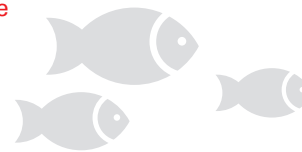
2 Corinthians 5:18-19



Monday 25 March

Leonardo was an illegal fisherman, harming the ecosystem with dynamite to make his catch. But today he's a reformed man. He joins his brother Lope in patrolling the seas to protect their vital resources.

On your next shopping trip, check which fish products are sustainably sourced.



Tuesday 26 March

Lope says, 'Due to the illegal fishing we couldn't catch enough fish to eat or sell – there was no justice, so we gathered as one to create a force to be listened to.'

Rise up and speak out with other Christian Aid supporters to multiply the impact of your campaigning. Find out more at caid.ie/climate

Wednesday 27 March

ICODE trains and encourages the villagers to speak out for their rights on climate change and illegal fishing activities.

We must call on institutions to invest in expanding renewable energy so that everyone has access to energy that is clean, safe and sustainable.

Talk to three others in your church or community this week about getting involved in the campaign towards HSBC. How could you take action together?

Thursday 28 March

Thanks to a patrol boat, Lope and Leonardo now monitor illegal activity. Lope explains: 'We have had so many conflicts with illegal fishers. Some of these fishermen carry guns but our only arms are pens, books and small radios.'

Give 10p for every book on your bookshelf, or £3.



Friday 29 March

Read Luke 19:1-10.

Zaccheus was a corrupt tax collector. When he met Jesus, he realised that his livelihood was ruining the lives of others. He gave back half of what he had to the poor, and paid back four times the amount to the people he owed. Our work in the Philippines is restoring damaged ecosystems to enable the fishing community to thrive again.

Think about how, as a community, we can give back to the environment what we have wrongfully taken.

Mothering Sunday weekend 30-31 March

Mothering Sunday is a day to celebrate what our maternal figures mean to us. Mary Ann had to wait three days to find out her children were safe after Haiyan. Luckily her children found shelter in another home during this time.

Give 20p for every picture of your mother in your house or on your phone. Scan or post the photo onto social media with #CountYourBlessings #ChristianAid and tell the world what she means to you.



Your total for Week 4



Patrolling the seas and creating a reef with jackstones has enabled the return of fish.

Eva with her catch.

Transformation

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

Colossians 3:1

Monday 01 April

God wants to transform our lives and make us more like him.



Let's pray together, that our hearts would be set on things above. That God would put in us a desire for his justice for those in the Philippines.



A concrete jackstone, part of an artificial reef.

Tuesday 02 April

Lope isn't just leader of his community, he's also using the techniques he learned from ICODE to build a jackstone reef and replant mangroves. The artificial reef prevents the illegal fisher boats from entering and protects the fish stocks.

Play a game of jackstones with someone (using jackstones or small pebbles). As you play, tell your partners about Lope and Eva. Discuss what you could do to combat climate change.

Wednesday 03 April

Eva has joined a savings group. As fishing is seasonal, she invests in times of abundance. This means when times are hard, she's still able to pay for essentials like the children's schooling.



Give 50p for every bank card or store card in your wallet or purse.



Thursday 04 April

Eva says: 'The savings group has really changed the attitude of the women and men. At the start of each meeting, we learn to pray together... We're much more productive now. I'm proud that I'm able to generate income.'

Give 50p for each job you have had.



Friday 05 April

'We're combatting and mitigating climate change!' – Eva. Tackling climate change requires us to be transformed too – leaving behind our old ways of excess consumption and reliance on fossil fuels, and taking up collective action to build a different future.



Write a letter to John Flint, CEO of HSBC. Explain why it's important they do more to stop funding climate change. For tips see caid.ie/climate

Weekend 06-07 April

Lope often says this prayer before he goes out to fish:

'Lead us Lord to the place where we can have a better catch. Lead us to a place of safety. Thank you Lord for leading our way and guiding us through this life, where we can better serve our family and community. Grant us wisdom to know where the graces are.'

How did you do on your Carbon Challenge? Why not try it for another week? Or longer...



Your total for
Week 5





Nilo received training to harvest seaweed

'Seaweed farming has really helped our family' - Nilo

Blessing

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake.

Psalm 23:1-3

Thursday 11 April

Nilo has also diversified; he produces seaweed ice-cream, noodles and pickles. Yum!

Take a photo of your favourite ice cream flavour, or maybe the most unusual you've had! Share this on Facebook or Instagram. Tag five of your friends to do the same and use #CountYourBlessings #ChristianAid



Monday 08 April

God is blessing us every day, oftentimes when we don't even notice it. He cares about our lives because he sees us as his children. Take some time to reflect on how God has blessed you over the last week.

Get some sticky notes and write down each blessing. Stick them where you'll see them regularly. Pray that ecosystems would thrive and that livelihoods would be restored in the Philippines.



Tuesday 09 April

Nilo was a fisherman. Then Typhoon Haiyan hit and it became difficult to catch fish. With no other way to earn a living, the future looked desperate. Then ICODE stepped in with training to harvest seaweed.

If a storm was about to destroy your home, what would you take with you?

Share a photo of what you treasure on social media using #CountYourBlessing #ChristianAid



Wednesday 10 April

Nilo and his community received training to improve techniques, increase the yield and quality of the seaweed, and were taught what to do in typhoons.

Check the weather forecast. What's the temperature going to be today? Give 10% of that number in pounds.



Friday 12 April

At times, we have misused the blessing of energy access.

During this season of Lent, we want to visit every single branch of HSBC to tell them to make the Big Shift out of fossil fuels and into renewable energy.

To find out how to get involved, email belfast@christian-aid.org or call (028) 9064 8133.

Saturday and Palm Sunday 13-14 April

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Philippians 2:3-4

Nilo uses the money earned to support his niece with her nursing studies, and provide his family's basic needs. He also pays for his mother's medical care.

Today is World Health Day. Give 20p for each time the health service has been there in your hour of need this year.



Your total for Week 6





'I don't want money and wealth, I just want enough for my family – good health and education and to serve the community.'

Lope

The Hope of the Cross

Hope is a powerful thing. We know that we can always put our hope and trust in God.

Maundy Thursday 18 April

Today is Maundy Thursday, the day Jesus had his last supper with the disciples. We remember that on this day, he washed the disciples' feet as a sign of humility. That he came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

 Many Christians use this as a day of 'Giving Alms'. Take a picture of an appreciated gift you've been given, and post it on social media. Use **#CountYourBlessings** **#ChristianAid**

Monday 15 April

Lope recalls that when Typhoon Haiyan battered the Philippines in 2013, 'the wind blew so strong, trees and houses around were destroyed... but we prayed earnestly, and we were safe until the typhoon ceased'.

Give 50p for every house you have lived in and you can provide hope for the restoration of communities in the Philippines.



Tuesday 16 April

Hope creates tangible change. Through your generosity, communities are being transformed and ecosystems are being reborn. With your gifts, our brothers and sisters around the world can rise up against the devastating effects of climate change.

Have a walk around your neighbourhood. Give 50p for every green space, park or field you walk past.



Wednesday 17 April

Lope says: 'I don't want money and wealth, I just want enough for my family – good health and education and to serve the community. I hope to keep my promise to support the community. I am very much thankful for the unwavering support of Christian Aid through ICODE. We hope and pray that many people will benefit [from] your generosity and partnership. Thank you very much.'



Pray for those who will benefit from your generosity this Lent.

Good Friday 19 April

He said, "It is finished." Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. John 19:30-31
Many people hated Jesus, but the reason he had to die was so much more than a matter of popularity. When Jesus died, he took what we deserved, freely and without a doubt in his mind that it was worth it. Isn't it amazing that God would love us that much?

Let this sink in. Then reflect on your 'Count Your Blessings' voyage. Think about the ways you have been most challenged.

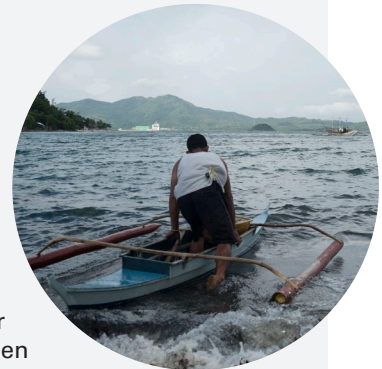
Saturday and Easter Sunday 20-21 April

Rise up!

Today we celebrate the finale of the most important event in history, the day Jesus rose from the dead. It's the day we as Christians remember that our guilt and shame were traded for his righteousness. When he rose to life, we 'rise up' from our death that we might be fully alive in Christ.

Spend some time reflecting upon what Jesus has done for you today.

Think of ways you can reflect this love to those in the Philippines. How can you voyage through life with more care for the environment?



Your total for
Week 7



Thank you for helping our neighbours like Eva and Lope to rise up and overcome.

Your generous gift enables this vital work to continue throughout the world.

Your Lent total:

£



It's really easy to donate:



Visit caid.ie/lent and donate online.



Send a cheque with the form overleaf. (Please write 'Count Your Blessings' on the reverse of the cheque.) Please return the form, along with your generous donations, to: **Count Your Blessings, Christian Aid Ireland, 96 Beechill Road, Belfast BT8 7QN**



Call **028 9064 8133** quoting the reference number overleaf to donate by credit or debit card.

At Easter, we celebrate the hope which overcomes everything. This Christian Aid Week, let's share that hope for life in all its fullness.

Get your church involved at caweek.org



Donation Form

reference number:
A032866

I enclose a cheque for

£

This includes £ from a separate children's *Count Your Blessings*.

Name

Address

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If you are happy for us to contact you by email or telephone please provide details below. We will use these details for campaigning and fundraising purposes. By providing them you consent to receiving marketing by Christian Aid by these methods:

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Add 25% to your donation for free!
Christian Aid can reclaim 25p for every £1 you donate from the tax you pay.

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Today's date

We would love to tell you how your support is making a difference! if you are new to Christian Aid and do not want us to write to you by post, or if we currently write to you and you want us to stop, please call us on **028 9064 8133** or email belfast@christian-aid.org including your full name and address.

Rise up with Lope and Eva against the tide of climate change this Lent.



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Your generous gift enables our vital work to continue throughout the world.

£18

could provide training to protect marine life by planting mangroves and improving management of natural resources.



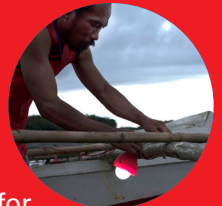
£39

could buy a solar panel providing essential lighting for fishing and income-generating activities.



£71

could provide a solar powered flashlight for a patrol boat to monitor from illegal fishing and support the community.



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